Video trailers for the books listed in Table 1 will serve as the basis for this article in which I will first discuss the relevance of book trailers for today's digitally enabled youth. Then, I will describe the major attributes of book trailers, proposing that they be viewed both as texts and cultural artifacts. Next, I connect the videos to Wolfgang Iser's (1978) concept that readers develop horizons of expectation in response to text. Finally, I present the findings of three studies in which undergraduate college students respond to the promotional book trailers mentioned in Table 1.

**Relevance**

**Digitally Enabled Youth**

Today's book trailer trend comes at a time when viewing online videos is a common practice among digitally enabled youth. YouTube (2010) reports that people view 2 billion online videos on YouTube per day, worldwide. Correspondingly, the Kaiser Foundation's Generation M2 report (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) shows that 70% of young people between the ages of 8 and 18 use the Internet on a typical day (p. 20). While online, these young people most frequently watch online videos, engage in social networking, and play computer games (p. 21).

Youth who view online videos likely share a cultural cognizance with them. Smagorinsky (2001) argues: "[T]exts are composed of signs that themselves are inscribed and codified as cultural artifacts and are read by people whose ways of encoding are conditioned by participation in cultural practice... [R]eaders and texts share a cultural cognizance" (p. 146). As a result, promotional video trailers are cultural artifacts within this global cultural practice of viewing online videos.

When social-networking Internet users enjoy online videos, they may post them to their MySpace, Facebook, or Twitter pages. Facebook alone has a growing audience of more than 400 million active users (Facebook, 2010), which demonstrates that social networking is a global cultural practice, too. Given these statistics, friend-to-friend video sharing of online book trailers could ignite interest in books, since people are most frequently motivated to read and/or buy books based on a friend's recommendation (Publisher's Weekly, 2007).

**Familiarity & Novelty**

In addition to valuing books recommended by friends, Mackey (1996) argues that young people may also value texts that appear in different formats because they seem more important and "the most worth attending to" (p. 20). This suggests that young consumers may think that a book they have seen in an online video trailer will provide a worthwhile reading experience because it is represented in both textual and digital media.

Consumers may also gravitate toward books that are promoted in a recognizable context. Video book trailers employ the familiar film trailer model to advertise new releases to prospective readers. Kernan (2004), a film trailer scholar, observes that trailers offer "more of what you know and love" and affirm both the familiar and the novel (p. 43). Hale (2002) sees that chain bookstores take up this same ideology in creating displays that highlight familiar and desirable titles, thereby assuring customers that they will not be disappointed with...
Could online video trailers spark an interest in books in the same way that film adaptations do? Relating to this question, Kirks Reviews inaugurated the Teen Book Video Awards in 2006. Similar to the Academy Awards, the Teen Book Video Awards help to "promote great books where teens live online," says Jerome Kramer of Kirkus Media (Mail, 2006, p. 1). For the 2009 contest, Random House challenged student filmmakers to produce motion picture book trailers for the following novels: Very LeFreak by Rachel Cohn (released December 12, 2010); Fallen by Lauren Kate (released December 8, 2009); and Maze Runner by James Dashner (released October 6, 2009). The context mimicked popular publication times such as American Idol and So You Think You Can Dance with a familiar online voting process. During the month of October 2009, Internet users viewed the three book trailer finalists and voted for the winner at the following website: http://www.kirksreviews.com/kirkusreviews/book_video/index.jsp.

The video book trailer for Fallen, created by filmmaker Benjamin Bliss, won the contest. On December 1, a week before Fallen was released, the novel was already #72 on Amazon.com's best-selling teen book list, which included several books from the Twilight series. In addition, The Maze Runner was on Amazon.com's top 100 teen booklist. While it is unclear whether the Teen Book Video Awards influenced buyers, the coincidence is suggestive.

Could online video trailers spark an interest in books in the same way that film adaptations do? A host of books have been adapted for movies over the last several years; among them are The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; Curious George; Charlie and the Chocolate Factory; The Harry Potter series; The Polar Express; Tuck Everlasting; Babe; and The Lord of the Rings. In looking at recent book sales after the movie releases, the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) Research and Development Committee (2006) notes: "If one judges by sales alone, it appears that movies can generate interest in books and vice versa" (p. 46). Ferguson (1998) observed that more than half of the youth in her survey of book buyers were inclined to purchase a book that corresponded with a movie they had recently seen. At the library, Sturm (2005) also saw a connection between movie releases and children's library book selections. Given these findings, there is potential for video book trailers to influence reader preferences.

**Trailer Attributes**

Kernan (2004) observes that most film trailers share common attributes, which provide a familiar framework for viewers. These attributes include: a) an opening or closing address to the audience about the source text (e.g., young adult novel); b) an introduction of the main characters; and c) a selection of scenes from the source text or montages of "pick and cut" action scenes (p. 9). The two types of book trailers examined in this article do, indeed, reflect these attributes. The first employs still and/or animated images, and usually includes text and a sound track. Actors and dialogue are usually absent, as in the trailers for After and Hunger Games. The second type most resembles movie trailers. Like the promotional videos for The Adoration of Jenna Fox, How I Live Now, and Very LeFreak, these book trailers include actors, live action scenes, and narration and/or dialogue.

Both types of book trailers in this article provide basic information about the novels. The trailers for Scholastic's Hunger Games, Penguin's After, Henry Holt's Adoration of Jenna Fox, and Random House's How I Live Now and Very LeFreak give closing addresses. Each shows the title, author, and book cover in the final frames of the trailer. A message about the release date and/or where the book can be purchased is also provided. Random House tells viewers Very LeFreak will be: "Available Everywhere Books Are Sold [in] January 2010." Penguin, on the other hand, uses the YouTube video description box to inform viewers that After will be: "On Sale August 11, 2009." But all of one of the five trailers, Hunger Games, introduces the main characters either in name or by sight. The trailer for Hunger Games mentions "two teenage heroes." The main character, Katniss, is identified in the YouTube description box for the video. Penguin includes the main character's name, Devon, in a large bold font as part of the first video wordlist. In the live trailer for Very LeFreak, the main character is introduced in the opening scene by her laptop, which chimes "Good morning, Very. It's time to get up. You're looking hot today." Very groans and tumbles out of bed to click the computer on her bed table. In the trailers for The Adoration of Jenna Fox and How I Live Now, the main character narrates the video as she appears in the scenes.

Both types of video book trailers either a montage of quick-cut images or a selection of action scenes from the novel to pique audience interest. For example, in the trailer for The Hunger Games, the flickering image of a television screen with static reception is the background to the following text: "Every moment is televised. This merging of image and text foreshadows scenes from the novel and creates space for viewer interpretation.

In contrast, the book trailers for The Adoration of Jenna Fox, How I Live Now, Maze Runner, and Very LeFreak resemble blockbuster movie trailers presenting a montage of scenes from the source text. For example, the trailer for Maze Runner is like a movie trailer for a horror film. It features a strange, unforgiving setting called the Glade. Underscored with suspenseful music and eerie sounds, the trailer opens with the main character, Thomas, enclosed in what appears to be a concrete shaft in the ground. All Thomas knows is his name. In the next scene, Thomas meets other young men who are also trapped in the Glade. One of these men reports that the group has been waiting for Thomas to help them find an exit through the maze. In the final scene, Thomas says that he wants to be a "maze runner." Then the camera turns to a bruised and bloodied young man chained to a table. The boy screams and bucks his body.

On the lighter side, the trailer for Very LeFreak presents like a movie trailer for a dramatic comedy. Very wakes to a computer greeting and moves through a series of daily events, each affected by her unabated use of technology. Her school administrator gives an ultimatum and, in the next scene, Very enters an electronic addicts' rehabilitation center. Here, the electronic outlets are covered with wire cages, and group activities include chanting: "Fasten the button and forget the past." The trailer for After and Hunger Games plays out like a drama. After the trailer opens with the main character, Katniss, on a video call, the trailer begins: "Greetings. I am Katniss Everdeen, District Twelve, 12th Annual Hunger Games contestant. I am here to apply before the Girl on Fire."

**Book Trailers as Anticipatory Stories**

Soter (1999) suggests that in examining a text relative to its author (or a trailer relative to its filmmaker), the text is not so innocent. From this perspective, the rhetorical strategies an author/filmmaker uses to persuade readers are more transparent. According to Kernan (2004), the film trailer is strategically designed to achieve the effects of "a unique form of narrative film exhibition, wherein promotional discourse and narrative pleasure are conjoined" (p. 1). Instead of the actual source text, we really want to read the idealized films or trailers for a source text expand and contract according to the depth of the gaps of the film or book interpretation.

Book trailer viewers actually see a filmmaker's personal response to a young adult novel, which is inevitably affected by the filmmaker's past experiences and current interests. While the latter book videos resemble blockbuster film trailers, there is an important difference. Movie trailers commonly feature actual excerpts from the full-length films, which are the source texts. In contrast, book trailers “give filmmakers an opportunity to share their interpretations of unique stories,” says Susan Muirhead, the filmmaker of the book trailer for How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff (cited from Maul, 2006b). In book trailers, viewers see the filmmakers’ very own interpretation of young adult novels. Butler (1995), in his discussion of film adaptations of books submits, says: "As with any conversion from one language to another, the most successful translation [of book to film] is never a strict literal literal one" (p. 310). Similarly, the most successful translation of story elements into a promotional book trailer may not be literal. Panaou & Tsilimen (2010) argue that realistically speaking, it is not possible to maintain the same subject and style of a source text in a translation. Rather, it becomes an interpretative re-contextualization of the source text (MacKay, 2010). Consequently, book trailer viewers are usually a filmmaker's personal response to a young adult novel, which is inevitably affected by the filmmaker's past experiences and current interests (Rosenblat, 1978/1994).

**Methodology**

The following set of studies examines college students’ horizons of expectations in response to the publisher’s promotional video trailers for the young adult novels After by Amy Efaw, How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff, The Adoration of Jenna Fox by Mary Pearson, The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins, The Maze Runner by James Dashner, and Very LeFreak by Rachel Cohn. The first study considers After and Very LeFreak. The second study focuses on the four other novels. Three groups of students who were enrolled in my undergraduate classes in adolescent and young adult literature at a large Midwest university participated in the studies as part of the course curriculum.
Group A consisted of 4 men and 12 women who consented to participate in the first study during winter term 2010. With the exception of two women, who were older than 30, the students in Group A were in their early twenties and of European American descent. Two groups participated in the second study. Group B included the Group A students along with 8 additional women and 2 additional men, for a total of 26 participants. One woman in Group B was of African American descent, while the other participants were of European American descent. Group C consisted of 15 women and 8 men who participated during spring term 2010. In Group C, 2 of the men and 2 of the women were older than 30. The other students were in their early twenties. Two women were of African American descent while the other participants were of European American descent.

As a class activity, I required that students in my adolescence literature courses view the publishers’ book trailers on YouTube at least twice and write a response to each of the trailers. In the first study, I simply asked Group A students: ‘What do you think the book is going to be about?’ In the second study, I asked Group B and C students to address the following set of questions in their responses: ‘What do you think the book is going to be about? Would you be interested in reading the book? What do you think are the most significant aspects of the promotional video trailer?’ The data I present in this article reflects only the responses of participants who had not read the selected book.

Data Analysis

I coded the participants’ responses to the book trailers and categorized them in terms of comments regarding characters, setting, plot overview, significant events, genre/story descriptors, connections to other texts, anticipated future reading experiences, and aesthetic qualities of the online video. Table 2 shows the results of the first study. Table 3 shows the results of the coding for participants’ responses to the book trailers in the second study.

Results: Study 1

After . As Table 2 demonstrates, the horizon of expectations of the 30-second text-based trailer for After varies among the participants. Thirteen participants think the main character is a girl who became pregnant, while 2 think the protagonist is a boy who gets his girlfriend pregnant. Half of the participants comment that the lead character is a good student. Three expect different murder scenarios, and 4 anticipate that the story will, in part, occur at a jail or a detention center. Other participants foresee that themes related to emotional struggle are part of the book.

Very LeFreak. In contrast to the result for After, the horizon of expectations for the 1-minute/53-second live action trailer for Very LeFreak are more uniform. For example, all of the participants agree that the story is about Very. Eleven participants (68%) anticipate that technology will be a major theme in the story. Half expect that Very’s addiction to electronics will cause her to go to a rehabilitation program. None of the participants in this first study, however, indicate a preference for either reading or avoiding After and Very LeFreak, based on the promotional book trailers.

Table 2. In Study 1, 16 participants responded to 2 book trailers. Their comments were coded and grouped by category, listed by row. The ‘Comments’ column shows the number of participants who share common expectations. For example, 2 participants expect that the lead character in After is male and gets his girlfriend pregnant. In contrast, all 16 participants expect that Very is the lead character in Very LeFreak.

Results: Study 2

The Hunger Games. Based on the trailer, approximately two-thirds of the participants expect that The Hunger Games is about a deadly context in which the last survivor wins. While this 1-minute/11-second trailer is entirely text-based with an underlying soundtrack, the participants anticipate that the book will share similarities with a range of survival-based reality television series, select films, and historical gladiator games. Moreover, based on the trailer, 95% of the students in Group C want to read the book. None of the participants require more information to make their decision about the book. This is not the case with any other trailer.

The Adoration of Jenna Fox. As a result of this 2-minute/3-second trailer, most of the participants (78%) comment that a character suffers a coma in the story. More than half mention an accident as well as memory loss. However, not everybody thinks that Jenna Fox is the lead character. At least 7 participants expect that the protagonist does not know Jenna at all. Approximately 50% of the participants are interested in reading the book. Two participants made connections to other texts.

The Maze Runner. Based on the 1-minute/40-second video trailer, over 60% of the participants want to read The Maze Runner. More than half of the participants noted that the characters’ survival in the novel is associated with solving a maze. The textual connections that students made to this book trailer included mythology, film, and another book, which has also been adapted to film.

How I Live Now. Even though the largest pool of participants (49 students) responded to this 2006 Teen Book Video Awards Finalist, the results are the most uniform. For example, 81% expect that based on the 1-minute/2-second trailer, How I Live Now is about life in wartime. Over 65% expect the loss of friends and family, and over 40% commented on the theme of survival. What’s more, 52% of the participants do not want to read the book. The majority of the comments about the aesthetic qualities of the trailer were negative, with 24% of the participants not having enough information to capture their interest. In addition to referencing the war in Iraq, participants connected this trailer to more books than television and film titles.

Table 3. In Study 2, at least 41 participants responded to promotional book trailers for: The Adoration of Jenna Fox, How I Live Now, The Hunger Games, and The Maze Runner. Their comments were coded and grouped into common categories, listed by row. The ‘Comments’ columns show the number of participants who share common expectations for each book. For example, 28 participants expect that Thomas is the lead character in The Maze Runner, and 17 expect that he lost his memory. Among the 23 Group C respondents to The Hunger Games, 22 want to read the book as a result of the trailer. In contrast, 24 participants do not want to read How I Live Now after viewing the trailer.
Given that the two studies are limited to students who were enrolled in my adolescent literature course, generalizations of the results are not widely applicable. These studies suggest, however, that promotional book trailers can both positively and negatively influence prospective readers’ horizons of expectations for young adult books. For instance, 95% of Group C wants to read Hunger Games, while only 30% of the same group is interested in the 2005 Printz Award winner, How I Live Now.

Results from the first study show that the participants’ horizons of expectations regarding the characters, plot, and themes of the novel were more varied than their expectations for Very LeFreak. One possible explanation for this difference is that the director of the Very LeFreak video, Rosie Lambert, emphasized a single character and plotline in the persuasive trailer. As arts of popular cultural practice, compelling book trailers also prompt readers to make connections to other stories and media. Through the literary lens of Cultural Poetics, by which text is a “social production” (Bressier, 2007, p. 224) that reflects the cultural discourses in which it is situated, the second study shows that book trailers are both social productions and cultural artifacts. As products of today’s digital Internet culture, online video trailers incorporate visual, audio, and textual modes into a digital storytelling framework. They also promote storytelling and reading in different formats. For instance, book trailer content is based on creating a little story narrative that highlights a bigger story narrative, which is primarily available in traditional book formats. Successful trailers influence viewers to deviate from digital video media in order to engage with the bigger source text in another mode.

Discussion

As arts of popular cultural practice, compelling book trailers also prompt readers to make connections to other stories and media. As arts of popular cultural practice, compelling book trailers also prompt readers to make connections to other stories and media. The Hunger Games trailer provides a fine example.

Over 46% of the participants read the trailer in the context of popular culture and made connections to reality television; mentioned were current shows such as Survivor, Lost, and American Gladiators; films such as Saw; as well as popular science fiction books. Similarly, at least 30% of the viewers of The Maze Runner trailer identified commonalities with television and film, particularly the horror movie Saw. These connections stem from the cultural practice of reading and referencing popular media text as part of contemporary discourse.

These connections also reinforce the theory that readers recognize and relate to stories through multiple formats that extend beyond books (MacKay, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). For instance, 11% of the viewers of The Maze Runner trailer volunteered that they liked the trailer as an independent story. One viewer comments: "Because the trailer consisted of all live video, Rosie Lambert, emphasized a single character and plotline in the persuasive trailer. Such emphasis is not as apparent in the 30-second text-based trailer for the film.”

For young adult books, for instance, 95% of Group C wants to read Hunger Games, while only 30% of the same group is interested in the 2005 Printz Award winner, How I Live Now.

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In other words, the ideal reader is steeped in popular culture and able to connect with text on multiple levels and modes. The studies also demonstrate how video trailers can positively and negatively influence readers. Participants' responses to the trailer for How I Live Now offer insight. Nearly half of all of the participants reported they had no desire to read the book after viewing the trailer. Thirteen viewers specifically commented that the book trailer does not provide enough information about How I Live Now to convince readers to engage with the source text. One student writes, "I don't think I would be interested in reading this book based solely on the trailer. It doesn't seem to give much information about what direction the book would go."

In addition to not having enough information, at least two participants saw a parallel between the aesthetic qualities of the video trailer and the aesthetic quality of the book. One student observes, "It took 30 seconds for the film trailer to get to the point, which makes me think that the book would lag." This comment reveals how potential readers may link the filmmaker's pacing of the trailer with their own horizons of expectations for the pacing of the novel. In this scenario, the filmmaker's translation of How I Live Now as a persuasive little story does not foster broad audience appeal among prospective readers.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, at least three participants commented that based on the trailer, they think The Maze Runner will be a page-turner. One student writes, "Yes [I'd read the book], the trailer makes it seem really suspenseful. I like page-turners." Another student comments, "The trailer was very fast-paced, which made me think that the book will be fast as well, and I love action-packed books."

Unlike the respondents who saw a negative connection between the aesthetic quality of the trailer and How I Live Now, these students equate the suspense the filmmaker Brighton Linge created in the video trailer for The Maze Runner as a marker for the quality of the book. In this situation, Linge's little trailer story influences the viewers' horizons of expectations for The Maze Runner, and they anticipate a page-turner.

Finally, in response to the trailer for The Hunger Games, a viewer writes, "I don't know what the book is about, and I don't care. The video served its purpose--I am very interested in finding out more about the book . . . ." Given that the Hunger Games trailer does not feature actors and dialogue like the trailers for How I Live Now and The Maze Runner, this viewer's response suggests there is no apparent rule that live-action trailers garner more interest among viewers of online videos than other trailer formats.

The filmmakers' ideal audience, however, is apparent in book trailers. Iser (1978) calls this ideal audience the implied reader. So, this implied reader may be someone who is very familiar with online videos and takes interest in the specific text, images, sounds, and film craft that movie/book trailers present. Likewise, the implied reader for The Hunger Games may be a person who has cultural knowledge of survival contests and the relatively recent phenomenon of reality television. This reader also recognizes the white noise of scrambled audio frequencies, the appearance of static television reception, and the view through the lens of a video recorder. In other words, the ideal reader is steeped in popular culture and able to connect with text on multiple levels and modes.

Implications

The results of the studies imply that as digital, multimodal texts, promotional online video trailers can strongly influence viewers' expectations of books and affect readers' decisions to purchase, borrow, and/or read new book titles. Moreover, the studies suggest that readers' engagement with online book trailers is shaped by cultural practice and informed by the readers' knowledge of popular culture.

So, what does this mean for teacher and teacher educators? Statistics such as those at the beginning of this article indicate that online video viewing and sharing is an established cultural practice. (Scholastic's promotional trailer for The Hunger Games that was uploaded prior to the first book release in September 2008 has been viewed approximately 80,800 times on YouTube as of this writing.) This suggests that there is an ongoing paradigm shift. Digitally enabled youth are using multimodal Internet tools to interact with books in ways that did not exist even ten years ago. In addition to viewing promotional trailers, they are engaging in activities such as directing, producing, and sharing their own fan-made book videos; creating soundtracks for books; writing book reviews; communicating with authors via websites and blogs; participating in social network book clubs; and publishing fan fiction that expands their favorite books. As a result, teachers and teacher educators may find themselves at a crossroads. They can follow the business-as-usual route, or they might shift and begin to incorporate new modalities into their literature and language arts programs.

In shifting pedagogy to integrate multimodal cultural practices into the classroom, it is important for teacher and teacher educators to understand how young adults use Internet tools to support their personal literary objectives. For example, a respondent to the trailer for The Adoration of Amina Fox writes that she tested her hypothesis about the book by viewing a fan-made video, "which confirmed immediately that the book was about perceptions of reality . . . ." Another participant decided to visit book review websites because she was not satisfied with the trailer for How I Live Now. Other students reported that after seeing the trailers, they conferred with friends and siblings online about the books. A few even shared that once they responded to the promotional trailers for class, they continued watching book videos that were listed on the same YouTube pages. These voluntary activities reflect students' routine engagement with Web-based technologies.

As a first step in a new direction, teachers and teacher educators might start at the YouTube website, where they can view book trailers and fan-made videos, and consider their own curiosities and horizons of expectations about the source text. From here, they can determine which Internet resources will further their engagement with the book and investigate the connections they make with the text.

Conclusion

When readers begin to envision an idealized text to fill in the gaps of little trailer narratives, the trailer's promotional value rises and the filmmaker's assumptions about what the implied reader desires are also reinforced (Kernan, 2004). However, once readers engage with the book, they may need to modify their expectations to accommodate the actual story. Consequently, if the book exceeds readers' trailer-driven expectations, the readers might argue that the trailer didn't do the book justice. If the book doesn't meet readers' expectations, the readers might declare that the book wasn't as good as the trailer. Either way, promotional book trailers can influence readers' initial interest in a book.

Through online book trailers, prospective readers are positioned to conjure horizons of expectations that could be satisfied by reading the featured novel. As young people's interaction with technology increases and the spectrum of video sharing and social networking platforms grows, the examination of the interplay between promotional book trailers and young adult literature continues to be relevant. This article suggests that through online book trailers, prospective readers are positioned to conjure horizons of expectations that could be satisfied by reading the featured novel. There are no guarantees, however, that the filmmakers' translation of the novel into promotional discourse will actually appeal to readers. In the end, we cannot judge a book by its trailer, and more research is needed to describe adolescents' engagement with promotional book videos in and outside of the school setting.

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References


The story exposes the whole system of corruption that led to a massive explosion taking innocent lives and poisoning multiple generations. The technical vocabulary and foreign words make this text a little more difficult. However, the story is relatively easy to follow. What Is Great About It: It is no secret that governments lie to their own people. Find the hottest innocent stories you'll love. Read hot and popular stories about innocent on Wattpad.


